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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 002916

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [CH](#) [JA](#)
SUBJECT: JAPAN, CHINA FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING: GOOD
ATMOSPHERICS

REF: A. TOKYO 02571

[1](#)B. TOKYO 02655

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Classified By: POL M/C W. Michael Meserve. Reasons:1.4(b/d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: During a readout of the May 23 meeting between the foreign ministers of Japan and China, Embassy Tokyo's MOFA contact acknowledged there were no breakthroughs on the issues under discussion but stressed that:

-- the meeting was a sign of China's desire to improve bilateral relations;

-- the atmospherics of the meeting were the best in more than two years;

-- the two sides will continue their discussions on gas drilling in the East China Sea;

-- the two countries would seek to establish a mechanism to avoid incidents in the East China Sea; and

-- the PRC wants to renew the Japan-China Security Dialogue.

End Summary.

Good Atmospherics

[1](#)2. (C) On May 25, MOFA Asian Affairs Bureau China Division Principal Deputy Director Kosei Nomura provided an Embassy Tokyo political officer with a readout of the May 23 meeting between Japan's Foreign Minister Taro Aso and PRC Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing on the margins of the Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) in Qatar. Nomura observed that this was FM Aso's first meeting with his Chinese counterpart since his appointment more than six months ago. The previous meeting between the two countries' foreign ministers, he noted, took place in Kyoto on the margins of the May 2005 Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) with then-FM Machimura.

[1](#)3. (C) Citing the meeting as a turning point in Beijing's attitude toward Tokyo, Nomura stated that PRC willingness to meet with FM Aso at this time was a sign of China's desire to improve bilateral relations (reftels). Relating comments

from China Division Director Hiroyasu Izumi, who attended the meeting in Doha, Nomura said the meeting's atmospherics were "very good," with good chemistry between the principals. Quoting Izumi, he said the bilateral exchange was "the best in more than two years." Acknowledging that there was no breakthrough on any of the issues discussed, Nomura claimed, nonetheless, that the 90-minute meeting would help turn the relationship in a "positive direction." He said the two ministers underscored the importance of the bilateral relationship to the region and stressed the need to strengthen dialogues and exchanges on economics, culture, and security. The importance of people-to-people exchanges, particularly among the youth of the two countries, was highlighted.

Yasukuni Shrine

14. (C) Stating that there was nothing new in the exchange on Yasukuni, Nomura said FM Li raised the Japanese Prime Minister's visits to the controversial war-related shrine in familiar terms and FM Aso explained PM Koizumi's position on the matter. However, FM Aso took the opportunity to explain his thinking on his own visits to Yasukuni, saying he would take a comprehensive view of the issue, considering his personal beliefs as well as the implications of his official position on such a visit. Nomura noted that the Foreign Minister had made similar comments recently in press conferences and in the Diet, but this was his first opportunity to discuss his views directly with the Chinese.

15. (C) The Chinese emphasized the importance of President Hu's statement on Japan-China relations to former PM Hashimoto during his visit to Beijing in late March, Nomura stated. FM Li noted that Japanese media reports of the statement had focused on President Hu's offer to hold mutual summits if Japanese leaders would commit not to visit

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Yasukuni shrine. However, Li stressed, the main point of President Hu's message was that the two countries' bilateral relationship is important to China and that the PRC wanted to improve relations with Japan. President Hu's statement to PM Hashimoto has become the new official Chinese position on bilateral relations, Nomura observed.

East China Sea Gas Drilling

16. (C) Nomura said the two sides did not go into details on their dispute over gas drilling in the East China Sea, but did confirm their intention to make the East China Sea a "sea of cooperation" and to accelerate the director general-level dialogue on the issue. The two countries will try to arrange the next DG meeting in June. Both countries agreed on the necessity of establishing a "mechanism" to avoid accidents or other kinds of incidents in the East China Sea. Nomura said that there were no specific proposals regarding the "mechanism" and that it would require further discussion.

Security Dialogue

17. (C) Relating the discussion on security issues, Nomura said that FM Aso raised the issue of transparency in China's defense policy, stating that transparency was important for building confidence between China and Japan. FM Li responded that China's defense policy was both transparent and defensive in nature. Noting that there had been no meeting of the Japan-China Security Dialogue in over two years, FM Li said the dialogue should resume as soon as possible. Japan is encouraged by this suggestion, Nomura stated.

UN Reform and Other Issues

¶8. (C) Nomura noted that FM Aso raised the importance of discussing UN reforms, particularly reforms in the Security Council. FM Li said China understood the importance of such a dialogue, but made no specific commitment.

¶9. (C) The two sides also touched on Taiwan, abandoned World War II Japanese chemical weapons, and the Six-Party Talks in familiar terms. Japan raised North Korean abductions of Japanese citizens, and China said it understood the importance of the issue. The two sides noted their desire to cooperate in regional fora, such as APEC, the Asean Regional Forum and Asean Plus Three. Both countries confirmed that as 2007 was the 35th anniversary year of the normalization of their relations, there would be a number of cultural exchanges and other special events next year.
SCHIEFFER